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The President's Daily Brief

March 25, 1974

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

March 25, 1974

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Arab League foreign ministers' conference, which opens today in Tunis, will apparently focus on relations with Europe and non-Arab Africa, as well as the coming UN General Assembly special session on energy and development. (Page 1)

Moscow evidently is giving added assurances of support to Baghdad as the Kurdish problem grows. (Page 2)

The Soviets may be tightening controls on Jewish emigration. (Page 3)

Heavy fighting continues in the Oudong area northwest of Phnom Penh as a Cambodian Army relief column is stalled by stiff resistance. (Page 4)

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ARAB LEAGUE

The Arab League foreign ministers' conference starting in Tunis today apparently will focus on relations with Europe and non-Arab Africa, as well as on the coming United Nations General Assembly special session on energy and development.

According to press reports, the conferees will also discuss the progress of the peace negotiations and again call for complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem. Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, however, probably hope to avoid any declaration by the conference which would impair their negotiating flexibility. Syrian President Asad is said to be particularly concerned that Arab forums such as this might force him to adopt a more rigid negotiating position when he must keep his options open.

The Arab ministers will probably seek to overcome Libyan and Iraqi misgivings concerning the recent lifting of the oil embargo and to work out a joint strategy to pursue in the special UN session and with the EC. The conference may form a committee to pursue the possibility of a dialogue with the Europeans on oil and related issues in response to the Community's call for an Arab-European conference. The Dutch reportedly are hopeful that the conference will recommend lifting the oil boycott against them.

Moroccan Foreign Minister Benhima recently said that Cairo, Damascus, and Amman have agreed to postpone the next Arab League summit conference, scheduled to open in Cairo on April 15. He added that they have also agreed to hold the summit in Rabat instead of Cairo, probably next September.

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USSR-IRAQ

Moscow evidently is giving added assurances of support to Baghdad as the Kurdish problem grows.

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Minister Grechko

Soviet Defense

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arrived on March 23 and is not scheduled to leave until after the March 26 deadline for the Kurdish rebels to accept the government's autonomy plan.

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The Soviets have openly praised Baghdad's proposal and favor its immediate acceptance by Kurdish leader Barzani. If a peaceful solution is not reached, Moscow probably will back Baghdad's efforts to subdue the rebels and enforce the plan.

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Moscow reportedly has served notice on Iran not to stir up trouble on its common border with Iraq. Iran has long provided material and financial support for the Kurds, and Moscow is probably concerned that Iran will exploit the situation.

The USSR has been cautiously neutral in its public treatment of the border problem between Iran and Iraq

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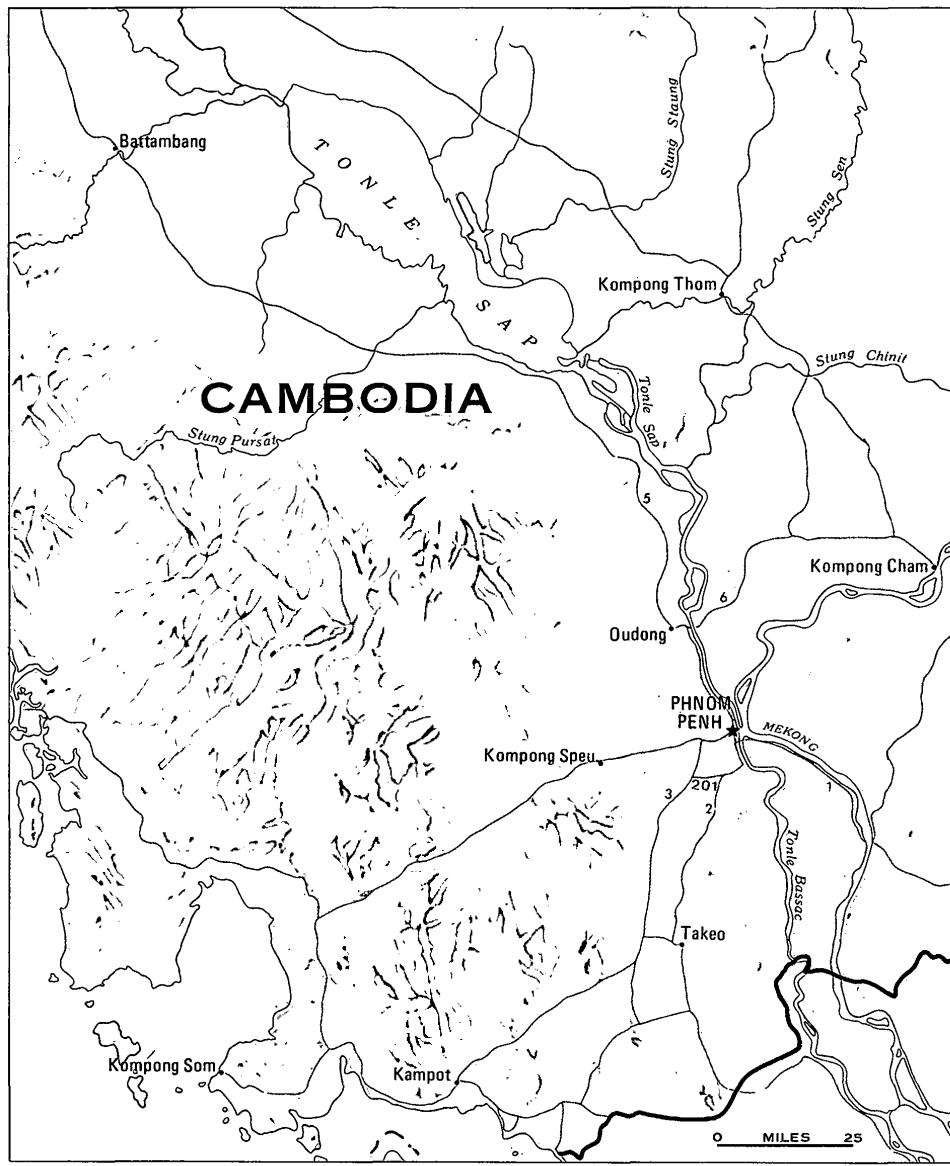
USSR

The Soviet Union may be tightening controls on Jewish emigration. Sources of the US Embassy in Moscow say that new procedures for emigration applications, reportedly in effect since March 1, have already brought a decrease in the number of applications for emigration to Israel.

Emigration applications must now be typewritten, according to these sources, and character references must go back at least six months. The latter requirement means in effect that a prospective emigrant must quit his job six months before applying or run the risk of being fired and receiving an unfavorable reference when his employer learns of his plans.

Applications must also now be submitted through local police headquarters, rather than directly to passport authorities. Police officials are said to be turning back a large number of applicants for failure to meet the new requirements.

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CAMBODIA

Heavy fighting continues in the Oudong area north-west of Phnom Penh. A 2,000-man Cambodian Army relief column, which late last week moved west to within one mile of Oudong, is now stalled by stiff resistance. Another relief force is moving toward the town from the south but has made only limited progress. Government troops, which were approaching Oudong from the north, have been diverted by increased pressure on other nearby army positions.

The army high command is giving top priority to the counterattack at Oudong. River convoys have moved armor and artillery up the Tonle Sap River to a beach-head several miles east of Oudong, and the encircled units near the town are receiving daily air support.

Combat activity picked up somewhat in the Phnom Penh area over the weekend as the Communists overran a government position ten miles southwest of the capital. Insurgent units also increased pressure against government defenses on the east bank of the Mekong just upstream from the capital. Government forces at Kampot City have withstood several Communist ground attacks and shellings in the past few days.

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